



Aruba: The island of Aloe



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5 high-level CDC officials are leaving in the latest turmoil for the public health agency

By **MIKE STOBBE**
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was rocked by five high-level departures on Tuesday in the latest turmoil for the nation's top public health agency.

The departures were announced at a meeting of agency senior leaders. The Atlanta-based CDC has two dozen centers and offices. The heads of five of them are stepping down, and that follows three other departures in recent weeks. This means close to a third of the agency's top management is leaving or left recently.

The departures described as retirements were not announced publicly. The Associated Press confirmed the news with two CDC officials who were not authorized to discuss it and spoke on condition of anonymity. The announcements come a day after the White House announced it is nominating Susan Monarez to be CDC director. But it's



A sign marks the entrance to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, on Oct. 8, 2013.

not clear how much, if any, influence that had on the leaders' decision to leave. The Trump administration earlier this month withdrew its nomination of former Florida congressman Dr. David Weldon just before a

Senate hearing. CDC employees including the organization's leaders have been bracing themselves for moves by the Trump administration to lay off staff and possibly dramatically reorganize the agency.

White House officials are reviewing a work force reduction proposal for CDC and other federal health agencies that was submitted earlier this month. Its contents have not been disclosed. "The challenges

for these individuals to do their jobs on a daily basis must be enormous," said Jason Schwartz, a Yale University health policy researcher who studies government health agencies. "The future of CDC is under threat, by any measure. It's understandable why individuals may decide to move on rather than see the agency diminished in its works, and its resources, and its ability to do its job." But losing a number of experienced leaders is clearly an additional blow to an already besieged agency, Schwartz added. The latest departures include:

Leslie Ann Dauphin, who oversees the Public Health Infrastructure Center and its more than 500 employees. That center coordinates CDC funding, strategy, and technical assistance to state, local and territorial health departments. Dr. Karen Remley, who heads the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. □

Associated Press

Appeals court allows Trump administration to suspend approval of new refugees amid lawsuit



President Donald Trump waves to the media as he walks on the South Lawn of the White House, in Washington, Saturday, March 22, 2025.

Associated Press

By **LINDSAY WHITEHURST and GENE JOHNSON**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An appeals court on Tuesday allowed the Trump administration to stop approving new refugees for entry into the U.S. as a lawsuit plays out over the president's executive order halting the nation's refugee admissions system. Refugees who were conditionally approved before President Donald Trump took office must still be processed under the order from a 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel, but the judges allowed the Republican administration to suspend new approvals.

The appeals court panel largely halted a ruling from U.S. District Judge Jamal Whitehead in Seattle.

He found that Trump could not nullify the law passed by Congress establishing the program, and it must be restarted.

Whitehead, who was appointed President Joe Biden, a Democrat, said the president does have substantial discretion to suspend refugee admissions but the authority was not limitless. He pointed to reports of refugees stranded in dangerous places, families separated from relatives in the U.S. and people sold all their possessions for travel to the U.S. that was later canceled. □

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More states move to ban cellphones in school as Georgia is latest to act

By JEFF AMY
Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — More states are moving to ban or restrict cellphones in school, a trend that continues to win bipartisan support in legislatures.

Senators in Georgia voted 54-2 on Tuesday to give final approval to a bill that would ban students in grades K-8 from using phones or other personal electronic devices during the school day. The measure goes to Republican Gov. Brian Kemp for his signature or veto.

Currently, nine states ban phones in school, but that number will likely soon rise. Similar bills this year have passed by wide margins in New Mexico, Tennessee and Utah and await action by those states' governors. Measures are also progressing rapidly in other states. The push for cellphone bans has been driven by concerns about the impact screen time has on children's mental health and complaints from teachers



A student uses their cell phone after unlocking the pouch that secures it from use during the school day at Bayside Academy, Friday, Aug. 16, 2024, in San Mateo, Calif.

Associated Press

that cellphones have become a constant distraction in the classroom.

"This bill isn't just about academics, it's about students' well-being," Republican Georgia state Sen. Jason Anavitate of Dallas said during debate Tuesday on House Bill 340.

"Studies link excessive phone use to mental health issues, decreasing social skills, and an increase in bullying. We want students engaged in school, socializing with friends during lunch and focusing in the classroom."

Nationally, 77% of U.S.

schools say they prohibit cellphones at school for nonacademic use, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. But that number is misleading. It does not mean students are following those bans or all those schools are enforcing them.

Arkansas, California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Ohio, South Carolina and Virginia have enacted measures banning or restricting students' use of cellphones in schools.

The specifics of the measures vary widely. Georgia's bill says students can't access their personal devices at any time during the school day, but enforcement is up to local school districts. Some Georgia districts are already using locking pouches, but schools could also just tell students to leave their phones in their locker, to turn them in to a teacher, or disable them using an online application. Students who need devices to monitor medical conditions or to help overcome intellectual disabilities would still be able to use them.

Some other states would still allow phones or other devices to be used in some situations. For example, the Utah bill lets schools permit classroom use under local policies. □

Illinois returns stolen land to Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation

By JOHN O'CONNOR
Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — The Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation has reclaimed land in Illinois that was promised to the tribe's leader 175 years ago but stolen by the federal government 20 years later.

A law signed by Gov. JB Pritzker last week transferred Shabbona Lake State Recreation Area, 1,500 acres (607 hectares) in north-central Illinois.

"We are proud to once again call this land home," said Joseph "Zeke" Rupnick, chairman of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation based in Mayetta,

Kansas.

The action returns to the Potawatomi territory in the same area that was ceded to Chief Shab-eh-nay in a treaty with the U.S. government in 1829. Nothing ever altered that treaty, but when Shab-eh-nay and his people left for several years to visit family in Kansas, the government sold the land to white settlers.

It's not entirely the same soil that the U.S. took from Chief Shab-eh-nay. The boundaries of his original 1,280-acre (518-hectare) reservation now encompass hundreds of acres of privately owned land, a golf course and county forest preserve. Re-

turning the original land would undoubtedly put the transfer into an interminable legal wrangle.

"This moment reflects the power of collaboration and the shared desire to build a future rooted in justice and respect," Rupnick said. "Illinois has shown true courage and vision by leading the way in the Land Back movement, demonstrating that healing and reconciliation are possible."

The land will stay open to the public as a park, with the state providing maintenance.

Rupnick for years has traveled repeatedly from Kansas to Illinois to negotiate

with local and state governments, provide equipment to help clean up after storms and speak with neighbors, many of whom fear changes will come to the park that will disrupt their lives. Rupnick told lawmakers last spring it made no sense to install a casino because of the number of state-sanctioned gambling houses in operation.

He did not rule out constructing a hotel, however, noting that the park, 68 miles (109 kilometers) west of Chicago, has 150 campsites, draws 500,000 visitors a year, and the closest lodging is a 20-minute drive away. □



This undated image provided by Wisconsin Historical Society shows Chief Shab-eh-nay.

Associated Press

Gunman who killed 23 in racist attack at Texas Walmart offered plea deal to avoid death penalty

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — The gunman who killed 23 people in a racist attack at an El Paso Walmart in 2019 in one of the deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history has been offered a plea deal to avoid the death penalty, a Texas prosecutor said Tuesday.

The announcement by El Paso County District Attorney James Montoya is a significant turn in the criminal case of Patrick Crusius, 26, who was already sentenced to 90 consecutive life sentences after pleading guilty in 2023 to federal hate crime charges.

Under the Biden administration, federal prosecutors also took the death penalty off the table but did not explain why.

In addition to the federal case, Crusius was also charged in state court with capital murder.

Montoya said he supports the death penalty and believes Crusius deserves it. But he said he met with the families of the victims and there was an overriding desire to conclude the process, though some relatives were willing to wait as long as it took for a death sentence.

"The vast majority of them want this case over and done with as quickly as



In the is Oct. 10, 2019 file photo, El Paso Walmart shooting suspect Patrick Crusius pleads not guilty during his arraignment in El Paso, Texas.

Associated Press

possible," he said.

Montoya also said pursuing the death penalty would mean a long and drawn-out legal battle with many hearings and appeals.

"I could see a worst-case scenario where this would not go to trial until 2028 if we continued to seek the death penalty," he said.

Montoya, a Democrat, took office in January after defeating a Republican incumbent who was appointed by Republican

Gov. Greg Abbott. Montoya's predecessors supported sending Crusius to death row.

"I've heard about it. I think the guy does deserve the death penalty, to be honest," Abbott said Tuesday about the decision. "Any shooting like that is what capital punishment is for."

Crusius, who is white, was 21 years old and had dropped out of community college when police say he drove more than 700 miles

(1,100 kilometers) from his home near Dallas to target Hispanics in El Paso.

Moments after posting a racist screed online that warned of a Hispanic "invasion" of the state, he opened fire with an AK-style rifle inside and outside the store.

Before the shooting, Crusius appears to have been consumed by the immigration debate, posting online in support of building the border wall and other

messages praising then-President Donald Trump's hardline border policies. He went further in the rant he posted before the attack, saying Hispanics were going to take over the government and economy.

In the years since the shooting, Republicans have called migrants crossing the southern border an "invasion" and dismissed criticism that such rhetoric fuels anti-immigrant views and violence.

In the U.S. government's case, Crusius received a life sentence for each of the 90 charges against him, half of which were classified as hate crimes. Then-Attorney General Merrick Garland said after the sentencing that "no one in this country should have to live in fear of hate-fueled violence."

One of his attorneys told the judge before the sentencing that his client had a "broken brain" and his thinking was "at odds with reality."

Federal prosecutors did not formally explain their decision not to seek the death penalty, but they did acknowledge that Crusius suffered from schizoaffective disorder, which can be marked by hallucinations, delusions and mood swings. □

Mangione wants a laptop in jail while he awaits trial in killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO



Luigi Mangione, accused of fatally shooting the UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson in New York City and leading authorities on a five-day search is scheduled, appears in court for a hearing, Feb. 21, 2025, in New York.

Associated Press

By JENNIFER PELTZ

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Luigi Mangione is asking for a laptop in jail, but just for legal purposes not for communicating with anyone as he awaits trial in the killing of UnitedHealthcare's CEO.

In a court filing made public late Monday, Mangione's lawyers proposed that he get a laptop configured solely to let him view a vast amount of documents, video and other material in the case surrounding the shooting of Brian Thompson. Similar limited-laptop provisions have been made for some other defendants in the federal lockup where Mangione is being held.

The Manhattan district attorney's office, which is prosecuting Mangione on a rare

New York state charge of murder as an act of terrorism, didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

According to Mangione's lawyers, prosecutors are frowning on the laptop request, saying that some witnesses have been threatened.

Defense lawyer Karen Friedman Agnifilo wrote that there's "no connection to Mr. Mangione for any of said alleged threats." Mangione, 26, is accused of gunning down Thompson in December outside a Manhattan hotel where UnitedHealthcare was about to hold an investor conference.

Thompson, who was 50 and had two children in high school, worked for decades within UnitedHealthcare and its parent company. □

Authoritarian leader of Belarus is sworn for a 7th term and tells his critics 'you have no future'

By YURAS KARMANAU

Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko was sworn in Tuesday to a seventh term, and he mocked those who derided him as "Europe's last dictator" by saying his country has more democracy "than those who cast themselves as its models."

"Half of the world is dreaming about our 'dictatorship,' the dictatorship of real business and interests of our people," Lukashenko, 70, said in his inauguration speech at the Independence Palace in the capital of Minsk. Hundreds of



In this photo released by Belarus' Presidential Press Service, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko takes his oath of office during his inauguration ceremony at the Palace of the Independence in Minsk, Belarus, Tuesday, March 25, 2025.

Associated Press

opposition supporters living abroad held anti-Lukashenko rallies Tuesday to mark

the anniversary of Belarus' short-lived independence in 1918 following the collapse of the Russian Empire. Lukashenko marked three decades in power last year,

and his political opponents have denounced the tightly orchestrated Jan. 26 election as a farce. The Belarus Central Election Commission declared he won with nearly 87% of the vote after a campaign in which four token challengers on the ballot all praised his rule. Opposition members have been imprisoned or exiled abroad by Lukashenko's unrelenting crackdown on dissent and free speech. Months of massive protests that were unprecedented in the history of the country of 9 million people followed the 2020 election and brought on the harsh crackdown. Over 65,000 people were arrested, thousands were beaten by police and independent media outlets

and nongovernmental organizations were closed and outlawed, bringing condemnation and sanctions from the West.

Thousands of Lukashenko supporters attended Tuesday's inauguration ceremony, where he denounced his critics as foreign stooges who were at odds with the people.

"You don't and won't have public support, you have no future," he declared. "We have more democracy than those who cast themselves as its models."

Belarusian activists say it holds more than 1,200 political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski, founder of the Viasna Human Rights Center. □

Israeli strikes in southwestern Syria kill 6 people as troops clash with residents

By OMAR ALBAM and KAREEM CHEHAYEB

Associated Press

KOAYIAH, Syria (AP) — An Israeli strike Tuesday in southwestern Syria killed at least six people as Israeli troops occupying the area clashed with local residents, Syria's Foreign Ministry and a war monitor reported.

Israeli military spokesperson Avichay Adraee said troops fired back at gunmen who attacked them, before launching a drone attack.

The Syrian ministry said the six killed were civilians.

Syrian state-run news agency SANA said that several people were wounded, including a woman. The report said Israeli tanks in the southwestern village of Koayiah also fired several rounds. Britain-based war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights put the death toll at seven. "We also call on the Syrian people to hold on to their land and reject any attempts at displacement or the imposition of a new reality by force, stressing that these attacks will not deter Syrians from defending their rights and their land," the Foreign Ministry's statement read, accusing Israel of "flagrant violation of national sovereignty and international laws." □



Yasser Farhan, a member of the fact-finding committee investigating sectarian killings during recent clashes between rival groups in an insurgency led by Bashar al-Assad loyalists in Syria's coastal region, holds a press conference in Damascus, Syria, Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Associated Press

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Court in Japan orders the dissolution of the Unification Church

By **MARI YAMAGUCHI**

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The Unification Church in Japan was ordered dissolved by a court Tuesday after a government request spurred by the investigation into the 2022 assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The South Korea-based church said it was considering an immediate appeal of the Tokyo District Court's revocation of its legal status, which would take away its tax-exempt privilege and require liquidation of its assets.

The order followed a request by Japan's Education Ministry in 2023 to dissolve the influential South Korea-based sect, citing manipulative fundraising and recruitment tactics that sowed fear among followers and harmed their families.

In the ruling, the court said the church's problems were extensive and continuous, and a dissolution order is necessary because it is not likely it could voluntarily reform, according to NHK television.

"We believe our claims were accepted," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshi-masa Hayashi told reporters, adding the government will continue efforts to support victims of the



Nobuya Fukumoto, foreground center, a lawyer for the Unification Church, is surrounded by reporters after the church was ordered dissolved by the Tokyo District Court, in front of the court in Tokyo Tuesday, March 25, 2025.

church.

The Japanese branch of the church had criticized the request as a serious threat to religious freedom and the human rights of its followers.

The church called the court order regrettable and unjust and said in a statement the court's decision was based on "a wrong legal interpretation and absolutely unacceptable."

Tomihiko Tanaka, president of the church's Japanese branch, accused the gov-

ernment of "fabricating damages." The church is "not a malicious group that should be dissolved," he told a news conference on Tuesday.

The investigation into Abe's assassination revealed links over decades between the church and Japan's governing Liberal Democratic Party. The church obtained legal status as a religious organization in Japan in the 1960s during an anti-communist movement supported by Abe's grandfa-

ther, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi.

The man accused of killing Abe resented the church and blamed it for his family's financial troubles.

The church, which officially calls itself the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, is the first religious group subject to a revocation order based on violations of Japan's civil code. Two earlier case involved criminal charges the Aum Shinrikyo doomsday cult, which carried out

a sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, and Myokakuji group, whose executives were convicted of fraud.

To seek the church's dissolution, the Education Ministry had submitted 5,000 documents and pieces of evidence to the court, based on interviews with more than 170 people.

The church tried to steer its followers' decision-making, using manipulative tactics, making them buy expensive goods and donate beyond their financial ability and causing fear and harm to them and their families, seriously deviating from the law on religious groups, officials and experts say.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs said the settlements reached in or outside court exceeded 20 billion yen (\$132 million) and involved more than 1,500 people.

Lawyers representing those seeking damages from the church welcomed the court decision as a major first step toward redress.

"We must pursue our effort to achieve redress and to prevent future problems," head lawyer Susumu Murakoshi told reporters, demanding the church accept the dissolution order and offer an apology and compensation to all victims. □

Royal Air Force engineers shamed by judge over theft of Paddington Bear statue

By **BRIAN MELLEY**

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — They didn't look after this bear.



This photo made available by PinPep shows a statue of Paddington Bear in Newbury, England, during its unveiling on Oct. 8, 2024.

Associated Press

In fact, two men who had been drinking kicked and yanked on a statue of Paddington, the fictional orphaned bear who came to England from Peru, until it broke in half.

Then they took it.

A judge on Tuesday chastised the duo both military personnel for being the "antithesis" of everything Paddington's character stands for.

Daniel Heath and William Lawrence, both 22 and engineers in the Royal Air Force, admitted in Reading Magistrates' Court that they were responsible for the March 2 vandalism in

Newbury, the hometown of Paddington creator Michael Bond.

"Paddington Bear is a beloved cultural icon with children and adults alike," Judge Sam Goozee said. "He represents kindness, tolerance and promotes integration and acceptance in our society. ... Your actions were the antithesis of everything Paddington stands for."

The statue of the bear in his signature blue coat and red hat was one of 23 installed last fall as part of a Paddington trail across England to mark the release of "Paddington in Peru." The

introspective bear is gazing skyward while clutching a sandwich with marmalade about to drip on his lap.

The judge noted that the label on Paddington's coat says, "Please look after this bear."

Prosecutor said Jamie Renuka said the men were drunk during the escapade that was captured by a surveillance camera on the empty street just before 2 a.m.

The two spirited away half of the statue in a taxi and returned to RAF Odiham base where the purloined Paddington was later found in Lawrence's car. □

National Park Arikok: Aruba's biggest nature conservation

The National Park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There are numerous animals to discover, for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches—a very rare occurrence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Nature Conservation

The protected area of National Park Arikok was officially established in 2000. Arikok National Park is a 34 square kilometers (7907 acres) of natural area, located at the north-eastern part of Aruba which contains examples of most of the island's flora and fauna against a backdrop of great geological complexity. We are proud to state that approximately 18% of the total land area of Aruba is assigned as a National Park, to protect and preserve the flora, fauna, geology and historical remains present within Arikok National Park.

The Landscape

There is a great geological variety within the park. The main aspects are the rough hills of the volcanic Aruba lava formation, the mysterious rocks of the batholithic quartz-diorite/tonalite, and the limestone rocks from fossilized coral. The two tallest hills on the island are situated within the park. Jamanota hill 188 meters (617 ft) and Arikok hill 176 meters (577 ft), from which the name of the park is derived.

The line of the permanently wind-and-wave beaten North Coast is broken by several bays (boca's). Most of them are small yet impressive inlets at the mouth of dry riverbeds. Some of these bays (boca's) are spectacular sights, adorned with white, sandy beaches and sand dunes, as is the case at Boca Prins and Dos Playa.

Arikok is also home to Conchi, Aruba's most important natural attraction; also known as The Natural Pool. The journey to the Pool is and adventure by itself and only possible by foot, horse, ATV or 4x4 vehicle.

Cultural and Historical components

There are a number of sites within the park that attest to the history of Aruba. The Caquetío Indians left rock paintings in Cunucu Arikok and Fontein Cave. The bird drawing in the park logo is a copy of one of these historical artistic expressions.

Old plantation (Cunucus) sites tell the story of an active yet challenging agricultural past.

These Cunucus were also residential areas for the few families that worked the land. These families found ways to survive in the difficult conditions, and were able to erect their homes with materials found in the area. Two of these adobe houses have been restored. Park rangers are learning many of the old building techniques in order to preserve this unique



Aruban mud-house. At Cunucu Arikok and near Plantation Prins you can find these adobe houses.

Park Management

For the management of the park, a dedicated foundation "Aruba Conservation Foundation (ACF), formerly known as Aruba

National Park Foundation. This foundation was established in July 2003. In February 2017, mangrove and wetland RAMSAR site #198 Spanish Lagoon was annexed to Arikok National Park due to its importance as a feeding and breeding area for water birds and as a nursery area for a variety

of marine organisms. With this addition, the areas under FPNA management increased by 70 hectares while the amount of species of flora and fauna to be conserved to over 250. On December 21st, 2018 (AB 2018 no. 77) Parke Marino Aruba – currently consisting of four marine protected areas (MPAs) – was officially established and subsequently brought under management of ACF. In 2019 management plans will be established for the new MPAs which include: coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangrove systems, a large diversity of breeding seabirds. Parke Marino Aruba also contains potential shark nursery areas, endangered sea turtle nesting beaches and marine mammal nursery areas. □

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Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Denise Britton from Columbus, North Carolina, USA.

She wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me is a special time that I get to spend with my family and friends. It's time to laugh, play, and just relax and have a good time."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

Aruban snacks and where to find them

ORANJESTAD — Want to taste something different for a change? How about some Aruban snacks that you can find all around the island? Hop in your car, and go to these locations to find some of the most popular

and tasty snacks that are beloved by our locals.

One of the staples of Aruban cuisine and snacks is the Pastechi. Pastechi is a Caribbean fried pastry that is filled with cheese,

meat, chicken, veggies and sometimes even fish! Or perhaps you might want to try a croquette, locally called a "kroket," which is a crusty fried snack with typically a meat and dough mix filling. The Aruban kroket is based on its Dutch counterpart, the "bitterbal".

These two snacks are typically found in all local snack trucks, which can be found all over the island, including on the side of the main road that stretches from San Nicolas to the Hotel Area. You can also find pastechis and kroketts at local bakeries and snack shops, like Bright Bakery in Piedra Plat, Huchada in Santa Cruz or Pastechi House in the city center. These places may also sell other snacks and sandwiches too, perfect for on-the-road lunch break.

While you're at it, why not accompany your snack with a refreshing "batido"? Batidos are fruit shakes, typically made with added milk for some creaminess. However, you can also ask to hold the milk. Batidos are



commonly found in snack shops too. You may find some batido shops next the flee markets downtown, or if you're on your way to San Nicolas, at Mauchi Smoothies and Juice Bar in Savaneta (located at the side of the main road).

If you are looking for something a bit more fresh and healthy, why not try some coconuts, or shaved ice from local vendors? These vendors carry their little shop at the back of their truck, so they are ever-moving around the island. However, there are a few spots where you can almost always find a coconut/shaved ice vendor:

1. Right next to the Red Anchor in San Nicolas, on the way to Baby Beach.
2. Along the main road next to the airport field.
3. At the California Light House.
4. At the Alto Vista Chapel.

These vendors may also sell other delights, like the beloved coconut-based dessert "cocada" or peanuts. All in all, in Aruba, you can always find some place to take a break and have a bite of something local, you maybe just might have to look for them! □

Photo credit: wheninaruba.com



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Aruba Tourism Authority honored a loyal visitor at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Goodwill Ambassador of Aruba. The honoree was respectfully honored with a certificate for his years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three levels of honor are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

**The honoree was:
Goodwill Ambassador**

Mr. William Hedberg from Ponte Vedra Beach Florida, United States.

Mr. Jorgino Willems representing the Aruba Tourism

Authority, and staff members of Bucuti & Tara Beach resort bestowed the certificate upon the honoree, presented him with gifts, and thanked him for choosing Aruba as his favorite vacation destination, as his home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to Aruba as provided by the honoree were:

- Aruba's people.
- Aruba's beaches.
- Aruba's weather.
- Aruba's restaurants.
- "The beautiful sunsets"



On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere grati-

tude and appreciation to the honoree for his continued visits to the "One Happy Island". □

Aruba: The island of Aloes

ORANJESTAD – Aloe vera, a succulent plant species, is renowned for its incredible properties for the skin. It is widely distributed and usually grows in tropical, semi-tropical and arid climates on the planet. But this plant also had a very prominent role in the history of Aruba, and its significance to the island's economy endures to this day.

The leaves of Aloe vera contain a good amount of gel which when used topically, is great for the skin. Traditionally, Arubans use this gel to treat minor burns and other skin ailments, or just to keep skin supple

and looking bright and nourished. Aside from the gel, aloe contains a bitter, yellow substance (called aloin) which is a gentle but powerful laxative, and it is also the origin of the industry of aloe in Aruba.

According to the website of Royal Aruba Aloe, Aloe vera was introduced in Aruba around 1840, when most of the island's inhabitants were farmers of little means. Dutch Governor Van Raders introduced the plant after it had been introduced in other islands of the Caribbean to cultivate and harvest the aloe to produce the laxative.

Around 1920, about two-thirds of Aruba was aloe fields, earning our island the nickname "The Island of Aloes."

Under Commander Jan Helenus Ferguson (1866-1871), aloe experienced a boom, which is why there is a road named after him, which goes through the aloe fields. In the 19th century, Aruba was the main

supplier of aloin for laxative, which was imported abroad to the United States and Europe. The aloin from Aruba and Curaçao was known to be one of the best in the world and was more expensive, which meant that at the time, it had significant economic impact, particularly for the local farmers.

However, by the time the oil industry arrived on Aruba, it changed the labor market on Aruba, shifting away from agriculture. It would be after World War II that aloe would make a comeback. And eventually, as science learned about the amazing properties of aloe gel, the industry shifted from producing laxative to producing skin care. An interesting fact is that in 1951, the production of Aruban aloe



amounted to around 30 percent of the total global production!

The impact and relevance of aloe is visible all around Aruba. While most homes will have a few plants for personal use and decoration, houses are also decorated with aloe motifs, and at some point, aloe even featured on post stamps. Around 1920, about two-thirds of Aruba was aloe fields, earning our island the nickname "The Island of Aloes." And in 1955, the aloe became a part of Aruba's coat of arms, symbolizing prosperity for the island. □

Images from the archive of the National Library of Aruba.





Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



From adobe to icon: St. Anne's Church in Aruba

Episode CCXCVI-296

Our narratives have long emphasized the vital balance required in all that we do and tolerate, especially on a small island like Aruba. For generations, our island enjoyed a laid-back colonial existence, shaped by its unique blend of cultures. However, the neglect of our cultural heritage and the alarming threats to its biodiversity has reached critical levels. The unchecked expansion of economic development and overpopulation now pose significant challenges to our native heritage, natural habitats, and sacred lands.

This platform is dedicated to preserving the value of rediscovering native traditions and the spirit of what it truly means to be Aruban. It seeks to explore our history and identity, while emphasizing the importance of moving forward in the face of opposition. In this episode, we share the story of one of Aruba's most beautiful Catholic churches, which began as an adobe structure.

In 1824, St. Anne's Church in Noord began as a mud or adobe structure. In 1878, it became independent from the St. Francisco parish and appointed its first priest, Father Te Riele, who came from Curaçao. Father Te Riele immediately began building a priest's house while temporarily residing in a schoolroom. The small stone church, built in 1831, was soon renovated and consecrated on St. Anne's Day, July 26, 1885. The church was modernized in 1886 and remained in its original state until 1916, when the current Noord Church was built some distance from the original structure. Today, St. Anne's Church, the oldest church on the island, serves as the center of the third parish of Aruba.

Around 1886, many Dominican priests arrived in Aruba to undertake the spiritual care of the Aruban population. The secular priest, who had previously served, either left or grew old with the passing years. Residents of Noord recall that, due to a lack of funds to build the stone church, the collaboration of all—adults and children alike—was necessary. Pastor Tomas, who was in charge of the church at the time,



From Etnia Nativa Library
E.N.

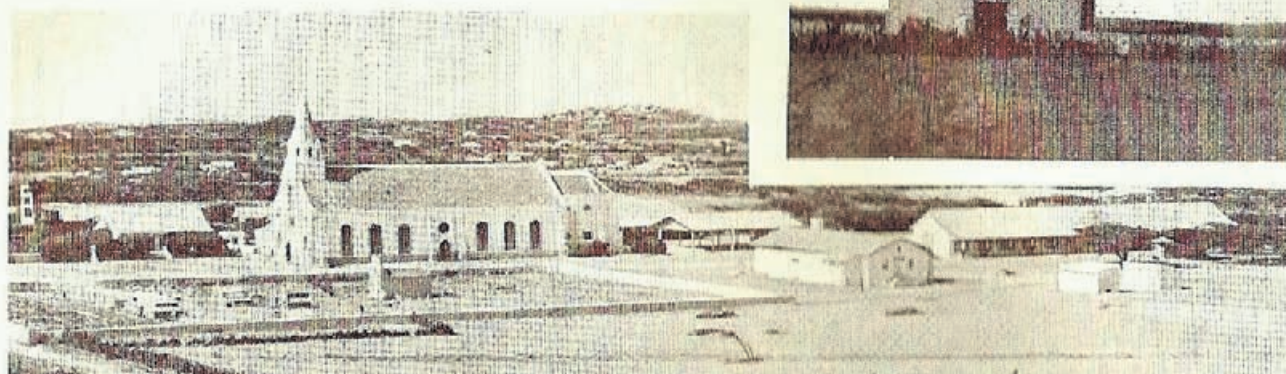
asked the children to help with the rebuilding process. After school, they had to report to be sent to the countryside to collect natural stone blocks from the nearby hills. These were heavy stones that could only be carried on the children's heads, as there was quite a distance between the picking site and the location where the new church was to be built. In this way, the entire local community contributed in one way or another to the construction of the new stone church.

At that time, the church was known as the Church of Mount Calvary, as well as St. Anne's Church—the name it still holds today. Three local residents were entrusted with the keys to the church and were responsible for its upkeep. These three Noord residents—Jan Hendrik Semeleer, Manuel Wolff, and Nicolas Tromp—were designated by the government as 'church keepers,' and

they oversaw the construction of the current cemetery next to the church in 1827.

Information has been recorded about two of these 'church keepers.' It is known that Jan Hendrik Semeleer, the ancestor of all those who carry this surname in Noord, owned a plantation in the southern part of present-day Noord, between Koyari and Washington. Another 'church keeper,' Manuel Wolff, married Ana Catharina Silvester between 1813 and 1829. He was a descendant of the old families of Alto Vista, and they had eleven children. The third 'church keeper,' Nicolaas Tromp, was descended from Daniel Pietersz Tromp, a person we believe his descendants have been on the island since before the Dutch colonial era. □

Noord's first stone church (1885). The church bell did not arrive before 1909; it was presented by a Protestant. In 1914, a beginning was made with the construction of a new church in replacement of the old one.
From Etnia Nativa Library



If you really enjoyed reading our stories and are interested in interacting and learning more about our island's true identity, there is no better choice than Etnia Nativa—the only 'living museum of its kind in the Caribbean.' It's a fascinating opportunity, a trendsetter since 1994, and a co-founder of Islands National Park, the Archaeological Museum Aruba, and numerous Artisan Foundations, among others. Etnia Nativa shares valuable knowledge and connects you with the ancient spirit and soul of the island. We recommend booking a visit via WhatsApp +297 592 2702, as visits are private and by appointment only. You can also reach us at etnianativa03@gmail.com

The stories of “Compa Nanzi”

(Oranjestad)—The most popular character you may hear about in the Caribbean is Anansi, known locally on Aruba as “Compa Nanzi”. Local children grew up hearing the tales of the conniving spider, and his legacy forms part of the oral narrative tradition that is common in Aruba.

Although the stories are most popular in the Caribbean, “Compa Nanzi” is not entirely unknown globally, especially not in the West African region. Brought to the “new world” by enslaved Africans from Ghana, the historical thread of how Nanzi was introduced on Aruba follows the enslaved Africans in Curacao during the colonial era, which saw the biggest population of enslaved Africans in the Dutch Caribbean.

The stories of Compa Nanzi were a sign of hope for freedom among the slaves, who passed around different stories involving the famous spider through word of mouth, due to not being able to express their native culture in the new world. These stories were a way to not only preserve their culture, but it acted as a medium for relief during the harsh treatment to which they were subjected to. It wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that the stories of Nanzi were written down in different languages. However, not all stories are completely alike in every country, as is the risk of oral story telling. However, one thing will always be dominant in Compa Nanzi's stories: his sneaky ways to get what he wants!

How Nanzi fooled the king

One day Nanzi was taking a stroll near the castle of Shon Arei, the king. He had this sudden urge to walk in. He didn't think too much about it and committed to what he had in mind. It was a warm afternoon, and the castle personnel were taking their afternoon nap. Even the soldier guarding the castle door was fast asleep, snoring so loud that his beard bounced up and down on his chin. Nanzi just slipped past him, looked back for a moment then walk right on in.

Nanzi stumbled upon the king's quarters. With all his excitement he sat in the king's throne, and put on his crown that was hanging on the side of the throne. It was very hot that day, and it wasn't long until Nanzi too fell asleep, right there on the king's throne. He was so deep in sleep and snoring so loud, that even when the king found him in his seat, Nanzi did not even notice.

Shon Arei was flabbergasted by the sight of Nanzi on his throne, wearing his crown. How disrespectful! “Soldiers, get him!” he commanded. Nanzi was sound asleep, but when the soldiers picked him up, he jumped from fright. By then though, the soldier already had him in their hold.

“Put him in a sack, stitch it up and throw him in the ocean!” the king said furiously. Two soldiers immediately entered the chamber, took the crown off Nanzi's head and pushed him in a sack.

Nanzi was terrified; it looks like this time he won't get away with his schemes. To get to the ocean, the soldier walked a long distance, and where beginning to feel very thirsty. Luckily they passed by a pub, and decided to have a nice cold beer. They set the sack with Nanzi in it outside and went to enjoy the refreshments. Nanzi was still trembling with fear in the sack.

What is that he hears? A herd of sheep walking by?

“Compadre, listen here!” Nanzi screamed as loud as he could. The sheep herder got close to the sack. “What is this?”

“Man, there is something very beautiful in here that you can see. It's very rare and strange, but indeed, there is something so beautiful in here that you've never seen or will ever see,” Nanzi told the herder. The herder, very dumb, believed Nanzi's word. “Let me see!” he said.

“Well if you must insist,” Nanzi said, “I'll let you take a look, but only for a quick second.” The herder opened the sack, and Nanzi immediately jumped out. Before the herder could even take a look into the sack, Nanzi pushed him in it, and the herder fell head first in.

Nanzi didn't waste any time, and closed off the sack real tight. He then picked up the herder's hat and starting walking behind the traveling sheep as if nothing happened. After a little while, the soldiers headed back outside to continue their journey. As they picked up the sack, the poor herder started screaming to let him out, but the soldiers ignored him, thinking it was Nanzi. Shon Arei went strolling a while later. He thought to himself: “This time Nanzi could not get away with his foolishness. He probably drowned in that sack ages ago.” That is why, when he saw Nanzi walk behind the herd of sheep on the street, he was flabbergasted again.

“Nanzi! Aren't you suppose to be at the bottom of the ocean floor?”

“I was, Your Majesty,” Nanzi replied. But you know what, there is so many things to see down there in the sack! Like this herd of sheep. Seeing that they had no herder, I started walking behind them and gained their trust pretty quickly. At the bottom of the ocean there are so many wonderful things, like diamonds, and bags of gold. Chests of silver and other precious stones,” Nanzi told the king.

“What is that you say?” the king was intrigued. “I want to see it too!”

The king immediately demanded to his soldiers to be put in a sack and be placed in the ocean. Naturally, Shon Arei died because of this. He was never found again. Nanzi followed the soldier back to the castle, where sat once again on the late king's thrown and put his crown on. He took possession of all of Shon Arei's belongings, and lived the rest of his life as king.

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Story and pictures are from “Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)” by Nilda Pinto.



CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

ACROSS 44 Newscast

1 Unexciting segment

5 The Milky Way, e.g. fixture

11 Shortly, in poems

12 Infant outfit

13 Poker game

14 Select on the radio dial

15 Model buy

16 Triangular sails

17 Half of Hispaniola

19 Urgent call

22 Boring

24 Cone fill

26 River to the Severn

27 Greek liqueur

28 Ceases

30 Sacred song

31 Pub pint

32 Suppress

34 Supply with cash

35 Young seal

38 Luau setting

41 Tedious fellow

42 "King of the Trumpet"

43 Radius partner

DOWN

1 Chore

2 Opposed to

3 Ski mask feature

4 Purpose

5 "I understand"

6 Jackal-headed god

7 Micro-scope part

8 Enzyme suffix

9 Noon, on a clock

10 Desire

16 Huck's friend

18 Pop's sister

19 Low point, of a sort

20 Seep

21 Location

22 "Very funny!"

23 Track shape

25 Dove calls

29 Use a water pistol

30 Enraged

33 Feet and meters

34 Ump's call

36 Coffee dispensers

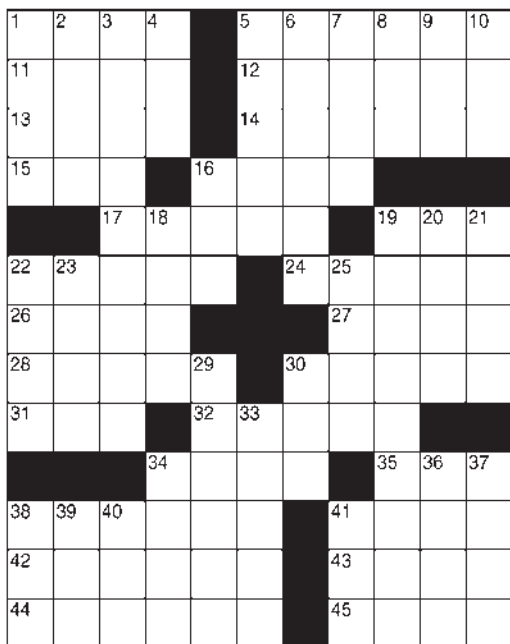
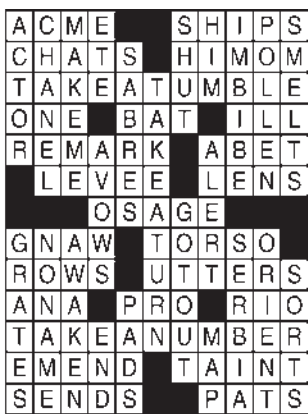
37 Summit

38 Possesses

39 Swiss summit

40 Question of identity

41 Future flower



3-27

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-27

CRYPTOQUOTE

YCT`P YP ALDYOEPXZD PU

EMFL XBYLTAC HURYTO XBUR

MXMB? — HEYTLCL KBUFLBS
Cryptoquote: ONE IS LOVED
BECAUSE ONE IS LOVED. NO REASON IS NEEDED
FOR LOVING. — PAULO COELHO

Cruise ship Schedule: March 24 - 30 2025

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	24	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	18.00	C	1
TUE	25	MARELLA DISCOVERY	08.00	20.00	C	1
WED	26	AMERA	08.00	23.00	C	1
		OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	I	1
FRI	28	REGAL PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
SAT	29	STAR CLIPPER	10.00	19.00	C	1
SUN	30	OCEANIA VISTA	10.00	20.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

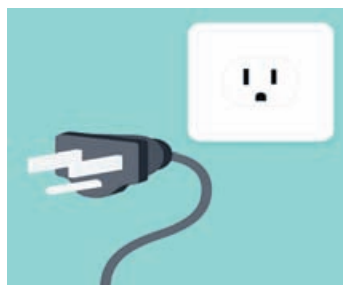
Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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La Quita beach resort

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Phase 2
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Ocean side
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Editor

Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668
Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.
Acc. #23951903
RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figuereo

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800
E: news@arubatoday.com
W: www.arubatoday.com
@arubatoday



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DOCTOR ON DUTY

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Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
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San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

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Eagle: Tel.587 9011
San Nicolas:
Centro Medico:Tel.584 5794

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank
Tel. 588 0002
FAVI- Visually Impaired
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Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888
Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

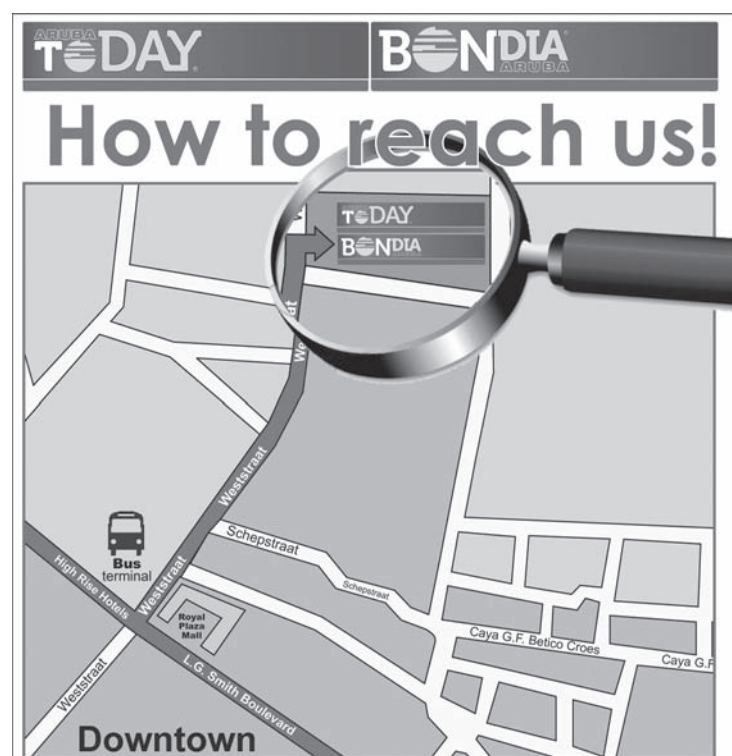
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS



Will Smith channels his post-slap introspection into music on 'Based on a True Story'

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr.
AP Entertainment Writer
LOS ANGELES (AP) — Will Smith could have let his infamous Oscar slap be his cinematic fade out with a career bruised, marriage dissected and reputation in a free fall. But instead of retreating, he turned inward for self-reflection. In the process, Smith rediscovered a long-neglected creative outlet in music, us-

ing the mic as a vessel to voice his thoughts after years of prioritizing his Hollywood dominance.

"I've taken the last couple of years to really do a deep dive on the parts of me that may or may not been in that level of certainty and asking those deep scary internal questions," said Smith, an Oscar and Grammy winner, who will release his fifth studio album "Based on a True Story" on Friday. It's his first music project in two decades since "Lost and Found."

"It really is the result of my initial self-examination," he said. "Every song is about some part of myself that I discovered or wanted to explore, something I wanted to share. It's the most full musical offering that I've ever created."

Smith's new offering features guest appearances from Big Sean, Teyana Taylor, DJ Jazzy Jeff, his son Jaden Smith, Jac Ross and Kanye West's Sunday Service Choir. His album weaves in gospel melodies and messages, but he doesn't call it a full-blown gospel project, despite the success of "You Can Make It," which soared to No. 1 on the Billboard Gospel Airplay chart.

Still, Smith let his renewed faith take the lead, steering his creative direction.



Will Smith poses for a portrait on Monday, March 17, 2025, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

He plans to release three albums this year, shaping each project into what he calls seasons.

The first season, Rave in the Wasteland, plays out across the 14 tracks of "Based on True Story" and represents his willingness to learn from life's lessons.

"I've come to some really beautiful answers for myself," Smith said. "My perception of God and reality."

Embracing adversity to fuel creativity

Though Smith, 56, is still a bankable global star, re-

building trust and momentum has been an uphill battle. He's grappled with harsh realities while trying to move past the backlash from slapping Chris Rock at the Oscars in 2022 and his 10-year ban from the ceremony. Several entertainers including Zoë Kravitz, Wanda Sykes and Rob Reiner criticized Smith's actions. Jim Carrey was particularly vocal, stating that Smith had been "living beyond the bandwidth" and cracked under the pressure. When asked about Carrey's "bandwidth" remark, Smith

agreed but reiterated that he needed to step back to gain a deeper understanding of himself and move beyond his own limitations.

"There's a small self that the small concept of myself - can get to the end of his bandwidth," he said. "And then, if I back up, there's like an infinite space, where my bandwidth is the bandwidth of life itself. It's like trying to not get stuck in having to be only a narrow band of things, to give myself permission to be wider in the truth of who and what I actually am." □

Justice Amy Coney Barrett's 'Listening to the Law' will give readers an inside account of the court

Amy Coney Barrett

REFLECTIONS ON THE COURT AND CONSTITUTION

Listening to the Law



This combination of images shows cover art for "Listening to the Law: Reflections on the Court and Constitution," left and a portrait of Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett at the Supreme Court building in Washington on Oct. 7, 2022.

Associated Press

By HILLEL ITALIE
AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett has a book coming out in September that her publisher is billing as an invitation for "readers to see the Supreme Court through the lens of her experience."

"Listening to the Law: Reflections on the Court and Constitution" will be released Sept. 9, according to Sentinel Books, a conservative imprint of Penguin Random House. "In 'Listening to the Law,' Justice Barrett illuminates her role and daily life as a justice, touching on everything from her deliberation process to dealing with media scrutiny," Friday's announcement by Sentinel reads in part. "With the warmth and clarity that made her a popular law professor, she brings to life the making of the Constitution and lays out her approach to interpreting its text, inviting readers to wrestle with questions of originalism and to embrace the rich heritage of the Constitution." In a statement issued through Sentinel, Barrett said, "The process of judging, which happens behind closed doors, can seem like a mystery.

It shouldn't." □



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2 Bed Oceanside \$26,000
2 Bed Ocean view \$22,500
2 Bed Garden view \$18,500
3 Bed Ocean view \$36,000
2 Bed WK 51 Ocean view \$65,500
2 Bed WK 52 Ocean View \$65,500
2 Bed WK 7 and 14 - all views

GOLD SEASON

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2 Bed Oceanside \$15,500
2 Bed Ocean view \$14,500
2 Bed Garden view \$13,000
3 Bed Ocean view \$30,000

Marriott Aruba Ocean Club PLATINUM SEASON

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2 Bed Ocean view \$29,000
1 Bed Ocean front \$23,000
1 Bed Ocean View \$17,000

GOLD SEASON

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New Falcons edge rusher Leonard Floyd says 'the more the merrier' if more help comes in NFL draft

By CHARLES ODUM

AP Sports Writer

FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga.

(AP) — For the second consecutive year, it's possible the Atlanta Falcons will focus on the same position with their biggest offseason signing and their first-round draft pick.

If so, Leonard Floyd would not mind at all.

Floyd said Tuesday he looks at pass rush as a team effort and added he would welcome more help coming in the NFL draft.

The Falcons agreed to a one-year, \$10 million deal with Floyd on March 11, soon after Floyd was released by the San Francisco 49ers. The Falcons announced the signing of the edge rusher on March 13.

One year ago, the Falcons signed quarterback Kirk Cousins to a four-year, \$180 million deal and then shocked many observers by making quarterback



San Francisco 49ers defensive end Leonard Floyd lines up against the Arizona Cardinals during the first half of an NFL football game, Jan. 5, 2025, in Glendale, Ariz.

Associated Press

Michael Penix Jr. the No. 8 overall pick of the draft.

Penix became the starter late last season after Cousins faded badly, unable to

avoid interceptions after leading the team to a 6-3 start.

The Falcons finished 8-9 and missed the playoffs for

the seventh consecutive season.

It wouldn't be a surprise if the Falcons, even after signing Floyd, again ad-

dress their pass rush with their No. 15 overall pick in the NFL draft on April 24.

Floyd, addressing reporters on Tuesday for the first time at the Falcons practice facility, said he would celebrate having more pass rush help come in the draft. "I mean I'll be happy, you know?" Floyd said. "To me, pass rush is like having a basketball team. You want to have a rotation, you want to have players that can come and do their thing. And other players that can come in and do their thing. ... So the more the merrier, for sure."

Floyd, 32, was second on the 49ers with 8 1/2 sacks last season. The Falcons are hoping for similar or even better production from the Atlanta native after ranking next to last in the league with 31 sacks in 2024.

Floyd has 66 1/2 sacks, including a combined 48 in the past five seasons. □

World Athletics to require chromosome testing of athletes in women's track and field

NANJING, China (AP) —

World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said Tuesday that the track and field's governing body has approved the introduction of cheek swabs and dry blood-spot tests for female athletes in order to maintain "the integrity of competition." The planned changes include reinstating a version of chromosome testing that was discontinued in the 1990s, requiring athletes who compete in the female category to submit to a cheek swab or dry blood-spot test for the presence of a gene that indicates

whether the athlete has a "Y" chromosome present

in males. Coe told a news conference that athletes



Unsuccessful candidate Sebastian Coe speaks to the media after he failed in his bid to become the new IOC President at the International Olympic Committee 144th session in Costa Navarino, western Greece, Thursday, March 20, 2025.

Associated Press

will have to take the test just once during their career. "It's important to do it because it maintains everything that we've been talking about, and particularly recently, about not just talking about the integrity of female women's sport, but actually guaranteeing it," Coe said after a two-day meeting of the World Athletics Council in Nanjing. "We feel this is a really important way of providing confidence and maintaining that absolute focus on the integrity of competition."

It's unclear whether the tests will be in place before

the world championships in September. Coe said that the new regulations will be drafted and that a testing provider will be confirmed over the next few weeks. Coe, the two-time Olympic champion who was unsuccessful last week in his bid to become IOC president, has been vocal about "protecting the female category" in track and field. He has said the International Olympic Committee needs to take a leadership role in the transgender debate instead of letting each individual sport decide their own regulations. □

MLB free agency: Plenty of talent potentially available in '25-26 class, likely none for \$700M

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**
AP Baseball Writer

There almost certainly won't be a \$700 million deal for any player in the baseball's next free agency class, nothing like the record contracts for two-way superstar Shohei Ohtani and four-time All-Star slugger Juan Soto the past two winters. Still, plenty of talented players are going into their final seasons before potentially becoming free agents for the first time.

Vladimir Guerrero Jr., five-tool player Kyle Tucker and starting pitchers Dylan Cease, Framber Valdez and Zac Gallen could all become available to other teams after this season. Three-time batting champion Luis Arráez and Bo Bichette, who twice led the American League in hits, could also be first-time free agents. Guerrero, like Soto already a four-time All-Star and Home Run Derby champion at age 26, had set a self-imposed deadline for negotiating a long-term agreement with Toronto. That passed at the start of spring training without a new deal, when he said he wanted to stay but would listen to other teams in free agency.

Blue Jays president Mark Shapiro remained optimistic going into the season that the team would eventually sign the first baseman to a contract extension.

Soto's \$765 million, 15-year contract with the New York Mets in December came after Ohtani got a \$700 million, 10-year deal from the Los Angeles Dodgers the previous offseason. Guerrero told ESPN in an interview after his deadline passed that he was seeking a similar contract length as Soto but noted that his last offer was for less than \$600 million. Here are some of the players eligible for free agency after this year's World Series:

1B Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Blue Jays
Guerrero, who will make \$28.5 million this season, hit a career-best .323 last year with a .940 OPS, 30 homers and 103 RBIs in his fourth consecutive All-Star sea-



Toronto Blue Jays' Vladimir Guerrero Jr. makes a catch during the seventh inning of a baseball game against the Chicago Cubs, Sunday, Aug. 18, 2024, in Chicago.

Associated Press

son. Over six seasons with the Blue Jays, he has a .288 average with 160 homers and 507 RBIs in 819 games. He finished second in the 2021 AL MVP voting behind unanimous choice Ohtani.

OF Kyle Tucker, Cubs

Houston clearly wasn't planning to pay the price to keep Tucker in free agency, so the Astros traded the three-time All-Star and Gold Glove-winning right fielder to Chicago in December for a third baseman, starting pitcher and top prospect outfielder that are all under team control for multiple seasons. The 28-year-old Tucker was limited to 78 games last year because of a fractured right shin, and still hit 23 homers. He had a combined 59 homers, 219 RBIs and 55 stolen bases in 2022-23.

RHP Dylan Cease, Padres

The 29-year-old Cease has 130 starts over the last four seasons, twice finishing in the top four in Cy Young Award voting. He was the AL runner-up behind unanimous winner Justin Verlander while with White Sox in 2022, and fourth in the NL last year when 14-11 with

a 3.47 ERA in 33 starts after being traded to the play-off-bound Padres during spring training from a Chicago team that went on to lose 121 games. Cease has 1,016 career strikeouts in 847 1/3 innings.

LHP Framber Valdez, Astros

One of the game's best left-handed starters, the 31-year-old Valdez has a 68-41 career record and is Houston's opening-day starter for the fourth year in a row. He was 15-7 with a 2.91 ERA in 28 games last season, his fifth in a row to finish with a winning record. The workhorse threw a no-hitter in 2023 and averaged more than 191 innings the past three years.

RHP Zac Gallen, Diamondbacks

The 29-year-old Gallen, 14-6 last year, is 43-19 with a 3.20 ERA in 93 starts the past three seasons. Arizona got him his rookie season in 2019 when it traded Jazz Chisholm Jr. to Miami. The Diamondbacks just gave 2021 NL Cy Young Award winner and four-time All-Star right-hander Corbin Burnes a \$210 million, six-year deal, the richest in franchise his-

tory. That could significantly impact whether they will also be able to keep Gallen, twice a top-five finisher in Cy Young voting.

1B Luis Arráez, Padres

Arráez has back-to-back 200-hit seasons, part of three batting titles in a row while finishing each of those seasons with a different team. The Padres acquired him last year in a midseason trade from Miami, which got him from Minnesota after his first batting title with the Twins in 2022. He goes into this season with a .323 career average and only 194 strikeouts in 2,858 career plate appearances.

SS Bo Bichette, Blue Jays
A calf injury and then a broken right middle finger limited Bichette to 81 games last season, and the 27-year-old two-time All-Star hit a career-low .225 with only four homers. Before that, he led the AL in hits in 2021 and 2022, and batted .306 in 2023 during his third consecutive 20-homer season.

DH Marcell Ozuna, Braves

Ozuna, who turns 35 next November, played in all 162 games for the first time last year and was an All-Star for

the third time — first since 2016. He has 79 homers and 204 RBIs over the past two years.

RHP Shane Bieber, Guardians

Bieber had 20 strikeouts in 12 scoreless innings last season before Tommy John surgery and becoming a free agent for the first time. Cleveland re-signed the 2020 AL Cy Young winner even though he won't pitch until later this season, during which the pitcher with a 62-32 career record turns 30. He does have a \$16 million player option for 2026.

A few Phillies

34-year-old catcher J.T. Realmuto, 32-year-old slugger Kyle Schwarber and 29-year-old left-handed starter Ranger Suárez are going into the final seasons of their contracts with the Phillies after being key figures for three consecutive playoff seasons. That began with that 2022 NL pennant that ended a decade-long postseason drought. Schwarber has 131 homers and 302 RBIs in that three-season span, along with 318 walks and 612 strikeouts. □